

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 EB-07 SY-05 DHA-02

OPR-02 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /084 W
----- 101619

O R 121500Z AUG 76

FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7822

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL IZMIR

AMCONSUL ADANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISTANBUL 3109

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS CGEN, CASC, PINS, OREP, ASEC

SUBJECT: ISTANBUL AIRPORT TERRORIST ATTACK

REF: ISTANBUL 3974, 3076, 3077, 3093;

ISTANBUL 3108; TELAVIV 5519

1. CONGEN HAS TRIED PIECE TOGETHER EVENTS SURROUNDING AUGUST 11
TERRORISTATTACK AT ISTANBUL'S YESILKOY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.
BASED ON RSO INTERVIEW OF ISTANBUL'S PUBLIC PROSECUTOR WHO
IS IN CHARGE OF INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENT, NEWS MEDIA, AND
OTHER CONGEN SOURCES, FOLLOWING REPORT COVERS DEVELOPMENTS AS
CLEARLY AS CAN BE DETERMINED AT THIS TIME

2. ALTHOUGH MOST NEWS COVERAGE REPORTS THAT THREE TERRORISTS
WERE INVOLVED IN ATTACK (ONE OF WHICH REPORTEDLY KILLED),
PUBLIC PROSECUTOR INDICATED HE DOES NOT BELIEVE ANY OTHERS
WERE INVOLVED BEYOND THE TWO WHO WERE CAPTURED BY TURKISH
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POLICE. THEY ARE IDENTIFIED

AS MALE PALESTINIANS WHO ARRIVED YESILKOY AUGUST 11
AT 3:55 PM LOCAL TIME ABOARD ALITALIA FLIGHT 700 FROM ROME.
THEY HAD APPARENTLY PROCEEDED TOROME FROM LIBYA. THEY ARE
IDENTIFIED AS HUSEYIN MOHAMMED BIN RESIT, AG 22, AND
MOHAMMED MEHDI EL-MEHDI, AGE 26, AND WERE REPORTEDLY
CARRYING KUWAITI PASSPORTS WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN
ISSUED IN LIBYA

3. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, WHICH WE BELIEVE LARGELY BASED
ON BRIEFING GIVEN BY ISTANBUL GOVERNOR AUGUST 11 AND
SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED BY PUBLIC PROSECUTOR TODAY
(AUGUST 12), TERRORISTS WERE ASSOCIATED WITH PALESTINIAN
PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRON DESCRIBED AS GROUP HEADED BY GEORGE
HABBASH

4. TERRORISTS CARRIED PLANE TICKETS FOR ONGOING PAKISTANI
AIRLINES FLIGHT 708 FROM ISTANBUL TO BAGHDAD WHICH
WAS SCHEDULED TO DEPART ICEP PM. WITH THESE TICKETS THEY
PASSED THROUGH PASSPORT CHECK INTO WAITING AREA DESIGNATED
FOR DEPARTING PASSENGERS ONLY WHICH IS LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR
OF AIRPORT'S INTERNATIONAL SECTION. THIS WAS SAME AREA WHERE
PASSENGERS WERE ASSEMBLING TO BAORD EL AL FLIGHT 582 ENROUTE
TEL AVIV WHICH HAD ARRIVED ISTANBUL 7:35 PM. THIS FLIGHT
WAS DUE TO DEPART 8:30 PM. WHEN EL AL PASSENGERS WERE
CALLED FOR BOARDING AND DESCENDED CONNECTING STAIRWAY TO FIRST
FLOOR WHERE THEY WOULD BOARD BUSES TO TAKE THEM TO AIRCRAFT,
TWO PALESTINIANS ACCOMPANIED THEM. ON FIRST FLOOR AT FOOT
OF STAIRWAY, TURKISH SECURITY SEARCHES ARE CONDUCTED.
THESE SEARCHES ARE NORMALLY VERY THOROUGH FOR EL AL FLIGHTS.

5. VERSIONS FROM WITNESSES AND VARIOUS PRESS REPORTS DO NOT
AGREE AS TO EXACT SEQUENCE THEREAFTER, BUT APPEARS THAT ONE OF
TERRORISTS SET OFF FIRST GRENADE SHORTLY AFTER 7:35 PM LOCAL
TIME WHEN HE WAS ABOUT TO BE SEARCHED BY TURKISH SECURITY
GUARD AT CHECK POINT. A SECOND AND THIRD GRENADE EXPLODED
SHORTLY THEREAFTER IN SAME AREA AND TERRORISTS OPENED FIRE.
THERE IS SOME QUESTION AS TO WHETHER OR NOT TURKISH GUARDS
RETURNED FIRE. REPORTEDLY INCIDENT LASTED THIRTY TO FORTY-
FIVE MINUTES.

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6. PUBLIC PROSECUTOR INFORMED US THAT HIS INVESTIGATION
REVEALED NO INTENT TO HIJACK PLANE. RATHER OBJECT OF
ATTACK WAS TO KILL AS MANY ISRAELI'S AS POSSIBLE. TERRORISTS
APPREHENDED STATED ATTACK WAS IN RETALIATION FOR ISRAELI RAID
ON ENTEBOE, UGANDA. PUBLIC PROSECUTOR ALSO STATED THAT AMCIT
ROSENTHAL WAS APPARENTLY VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES. THREE GRENADES
WERE SET OFF DURING THE ATTACK ON PASSENGERS WHO WERE
MOSTLY ISRAELI CITIZENS. ONE UNEXPLODED GRENADE WAS SEIZED

FROM TERRORISTS AND WAS FOUND TO BE RUSSIAN-MADE
ANTI-PERSONNEL GRENADE (CONTAINING NUMEROUS SMALL METAL PELLETS).
TWO 9 MM AUTOMATIC WEAPONS WERE CONFISCATED FROM TERRORISTS.
INVESTIGATING AUTHORITIES ARE VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THEY ARE OF
POLISH MAKE BUT COULD BE HUNGARIAN

7. AFTER RIDDLING AREA, ONE TERRORIST SURRENDERED OR WAS
SUBDUED AND SECOND SURRENDERED SHORTLY THEREAFTER.
TERRORISTS WERE IN TURKISH AUTHORITIES' CUSTODY SHORTLY AFTER
8:00 PM

8. WHEN ATTACK STARTED, EL AL PASSENGERS FROM TEL AVIV
DEPLANING IN ISTANBUL, INCLUDING AMCITS REPORTED ISTANBUL
3077, WERE LOCATED NEXT TO AREA WHERE ATTACK LAUNCHED. BLASTS
FROM GRENADES AND BULLETS FROM GUNFIRE APPARENTLY CAME THROUGH
PARTITION INTO THIS AREA INJURING SOME OF INBOUND PASSENGERS
INCLUDING TWO AMCITS REPORTED ISTANBUL 3077 AND 3093. FORTUNATELY,
MAJORITY OF AMCITS HAD PASSED PASSPORT CONTROL, WERE ABLE TO
SEEK COVER BEHIND LARGE METAL BAGGAGE CONVEYORS AND WERE
SUBSEQUENTLY CLEARED OUT OF AREA BY TURKISH SECURITY GUARDS.
YESILKOY AIRPORT WAS CLOSED FOR NUMBER OF HOURS AFTER ATTACK,
BUT LATER RESUMED SERVICE

9. SOME PASSENGERS OUTBOUND ON EL AL FLIGHT 582 WERE FAR
ENOUGH BEYOND AREA OF ATTACK TO ESCAPE INJURY AND SUBSEQUENTLY
BOARDED AWAITING EL AL PLANE WHICH DEPARTED APPROXIMATELY ON
SCHEDULE (8:30 PM). AMONG PASSENGERS WHO SAFELY ARRIVED TEL
AVIV WERE FIVE AMCITS AS REPORTED TEL AVIV 5519.

10. TALLY OF WOUNDED DURING ATTACK VARIES BOTH IN
PRESS REPORTS AND FROM CONGEN'S OTHER SOURCES. CONSENSUS
SEEMS TO BE THAT AT LEAST SEVENTEEN FOREIGN NATIONALS SUSTAINED
VARIOUS INJURIES. ALL SOURCES CONFIRM THAT THERE WERE TWO
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WOUNDED AMERICANS HOSPITALIZED AS REPORTED
IN REFTELS. CONGEN CONTINUES TO CANVASS HOSPITALS AND
TO CHECK FLIGHT LISTS TO ASSURE THAT NO OTHER AMCITS INVOLVED.

11. REPORTS WE HAVE INDICATED THAT FOUR PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN
TERRORIST ATTACK: HAROLD ROSENTHAL (AMERICAN),
YUKAKO HIRAMO (JAPANESE), SALO SALAMO (ISRAELI), AND
SHLOMO WEISBACK (ISRAELI).

12. CONGEN CONTINUES TO ASSIST AMCITS STILL IN
ISTANBUL INVOLVED IN INCIDENT AND WILL FACILITATE THEIR
ONWARD TRAVEL. BATJER

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